

Commissioner's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, September 28, 2012

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Notes from Acting Commissioner Abbott:

1. Commissioner Gist recovering from surgery

We all are extremely grateful and relieved that Commissioner Gist's surgery was completely successfully,

with no complications. The Commissioner made a very speedy hospital recovery, and she is at home now and resting to gain back her full strength.

The many messages of support from you and from others on your team have been a great comfort to the Commissioner during this entire ordeal. Let's continue to hope and expect that she will make a rapid and full recovery and that she will be back at RIDE as soon as possible to carry on with her important work on behalf of all Rhode Island students.

2. College Board releases SAT, AP results

Earlier this week (Monday), the College Board released SAT and AP results, which showed that participation among Rhode Island students on the College Board SAT and AP exams is increasing, but SAT scores have declined this year, mirroring a national trend.

The participation rates on the SAT increased by one percentage point, to 65 percent, among last year's senior class, continuing a ten-year trend of rising participation rates among Rhode Island public-school students. The Rhode Island participation rate was 14th in the country (tied with North Carolina).

On the SAT scale of 200 to 800, Rhode Island public-school seniors had a mean score of 477 in critical reading (down 5 points from 2011), 480 in math (down 2 points), and 470 in writing (down 4 points). The mean scores for all public-school students nationwide were 491 in reading (down 2 points), 505 in math (down 1 point), and 481 in writing (down 1 point).

Although we had hoped to see an improvement in SAT scores across Rhode Island, we are encouraged that our SAT participation rate continues to improve. Participation rates in the SAT and AP exams are strong indications that many of our students are taking challenging courses that will prepare them for postsecondary education. We will continue working to ensure that all of our graduates are ready for success in college and in challenging careers.

Participation in AP exams by Rhode Island public-school students also continues a five-year improvement trend, according to results the College Board released today. During the previous (2011-12) school year, 3,456 Rhode Island public-school students (up 11.4 percent from 2010-11) took a total of 5,709 AP exams (up 15.2 percent). Nationally, the increase was 6.4 percent among test-takers and 7 percent among exams taken.

Of the 5,709 AP exams Rhode Island public-school students took last year, 3,264 (57 percent – matching the national rate) were scored 3 (out of 5) or better, which the College Board considers to be “an indicator of an ability to do successful work at most colleges.”

From RIDE:

3. Decision posted on request for litigation expenses

Our Legal Office has posted the following decision, on a request for reasonable litigation expenses under the Equal Access to Justice Act:

**[http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/D
OCS/2012/016-](http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/RideDirectory/D
OCS/2012/016-)**

[12 Parent of Student P. Doe v. Providence S.B. 091912.pdf](#)

4. Administrators to have read-only access to Alternate Assessment datafolios

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

Test coordinators, principals, and special education directors may have read-only access to Rhode Island Alternate Assessment (RIAA) datafolios. This access will enable administrators to more easily support educators as they administer the RIAA throughout the year. Educators administering the RIAA must first enter the administrator's e-mail address into each student's account. Once this is done, and administrators create their own ProFile account, they will be able to view each student's datafolio throughout the year. Instructions on how to create an account in ProFile as well as the District and School Administrator's Manual can be found here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/Altassessment.asp>
[X](#).

5. Rhode Island social workers' annual conference announced

Please see this message from our Office of Student, Community, and Academic Supports:

The annual conference, co-sponsored by the Rhode Island Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (RI-NASW) and the Rhode Island School

Social Worker Affiliates (RISSWA), will take place Friday, **November 2**. This is the single opportunity in which public-school social workers from throughout the state convene to examine educational issues endemic to social work practice in the schools. This is a critical professional development effort and supports the maintenance of social workers' licensure mandates.

This year's conference theme is "In Concert with Others: Collaborative Conversations in Ethics and Cultural Competence." Joanne Corbin, Ph.D., LCSW, from the Smith College School of Social Work, is the featured presenter. She has presented and written extensively in educational ethics and reform. Additionally, she brings a unique perspective on children of color (from Third World countries) who have experienced significant trauma. For more information, call RI-NASW, at 274-494, or visit its website:

<http://www.rinasw.info/nasw.htm>.

6. Changes announced in federal subsidies for National Board certification

Please see this message from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has announced that, with the start of the next (2013-14) school year, there will be changes to the federal subsidy program. While the National Board will continue the assessment and certification process, it may target grant funds to schoolwide initiatives or for educators who teach in high-needs school. At this time,

the National Board is still determining how it will best support schools and educators in the future.

In light of these upcoming changes, we are encouraging educators who are interested in pursuing National Board certification to come on board this fall. Please notify your educators that both federal and state subsidy funds are still available for the current (2012-13) school year. Any educators who have been considering pursuing National Board certification this year or in the near future should step forward this year to ensure subsidies.

7. Registration opens for Rhode Island Model Summer Academy follow-up trainings

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Registration is open for the Rhode Island Model Edition II Module 1 trainings for both personnel evaluating teachers and personnel evaluating building administrators. The trainings are being offered multiple times at different locations across the state over a six-week period from late November to mid-January. The Edition II Module 1 trainings will build on the Summer Academies and provide ongoing support for full implementation of the Rhode Island Model. The trainings are required for all personnel evaluating teachers or building administrators in LEAs implementing the Rhode Island Model, and early registration is recommended.

For additional information about the Edition II Module 1 trainings, including registration directions, please go to the *Training Registration* page on the RIDE website. at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/TrainingReg.aspx>.

8. EPSS *Getting Started* instructional videos now available

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

In addition to the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS) guides, educators now have access to EPSS *Getting Started* videos. The videos are available in multiple formats, including QuickTime, MP4, and Windows Media, and can be used for individual study or facilitated group learning.

Educators can access the videos on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/EPSS.aspx>.

9. LEAs must submit Teacher-Course-Student data daily

Please see this notice from our RIDEmap Team:

It has come to our attention that there is confusion in the field about requirements related to the collection of Teacher-Course-Student (TCS) data. Please be aware that LEAs are required to submit data for all grades and

subjects for all schools on a daily basis. This is true regardless of whether an LEA is planning to use the new state Instructional Management System (IMS) this year. TCS data are necessary for other purposes as well, particularly for assigning students to teachers for the purposes of growth calculations. Principals, guidance departments, and district data managers should work closely together to ensure that this information is captured accurately in the student-information system for submission to RIDE. Additional information about the TCS data specifications can be found on the RIDE website, at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/onis/Docs/DataCollections/2012-13/TeacherCourseStudentData_v2-0_Clean.pdf

and

<https://www.eride.ri.gov/eRide40/DataDictionary/Default.aspx>.

10. **TCS vs. SCED course coding guidelines released**

Please see this notice from our RIDEmap Team:

LEAs should be verifying the School Codes for the Exchange of Data (SCED) codes for all existing courses taught in their schools. To help eliminate any confusion about the relationship between this process and the TCS collection, RIDE has developed brief guidelines. Please note that there are different timelines for elementary schools, middle schools, and high

schools. The guidelines are posted on the RIDE website, at:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/dataworks/documents/TCS_SC_ED_guidelines.pdf

11. LEAs' Single Sign-On (SSO) administrators must assign user roles for RIDEmap

Please see this notice from our RIDEmap Team:

RIDEmap is our new portal that provides the access to resources and support. All educators who verified their e-mail addresses this summer have been e-mailed a username and a temporary password. We currently have almost 20,000 user accounts on RIDEmap! The Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS) and the Instructional Management System (IMS) both launched earlier this month (September 10). Prior to the systems' launching, RIDE assigned necessary roles to all teachers based on the data available in the Personnel Assignment Process (PAP), which LEAs were required to update by August 17. In addition, RIDE also assigned necessary roles to superintendents and principals. *From this point forward, your district SSO Administrator must manage (adding or removing) user-role assignments by updating roles in RIDEmap.*

If a staff member does not have a RIDEmap account and would like one, refer her or him to <https://ridemap.ride.ri.gov> and click on the "Register for New Account." Users create their own accounts; however, in order to access any of the internal RIDE links such as EPSS or IMS, the user needs to contact

their district SSO Administrator to assign the necessary roles.

12. RIDE develops, posts fact sheet on Technology Bond

Please see this notice from our Office of Statewide Efficiencies:

Earlier this year, the General Assembly passed and Governor Chafee signed into law an article establishing a \$20-million bond to provide wireless access to classrooms across the state over the next three to five years. As Commissioner Gist has noted:

Students, teachers, and other friends of education across Rhode Island are enthusiastic about the possibilities that technology offers for improving instruction and advancing student achievement. We have a great opportunity to move forward with these innovations in Rhode Island, and the Technology Infrastructure Capital Bond will ensure that all students have access to 21st-century learning technology.

To answer some of the questions you and others in the education field have raised about the Technology Bond, we have developed a fact sheet with a set of FAQs, which we have posted on the RIDE website, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/RIDE/docs/techbond/Tech%20bond%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

Please feel free to contact our Director of Statewide Efficiencies, Cindy Brown, at

Cynthia.brown@ride.ri.gov, if you need further information about the Technology Bond.

From the U.S. Department of Education:

13. Education Secretary Duncan delivers back-to-school speech

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan delivered this back-to-school speech to students last week (September 21) at LBJ Plaza, in Washington, D.C., at the conclusion of the Back to School bus tour:

Ask yourself this question: In my education, am I a passenger or a driver?

The theme of this bus tour — and it's written in huge letters on the bus — has been "Education Drives America."

Think about it this way: Your education is going to drive you. It's going to take you places. For those of you who really take an active role and real responsibility for your education, the sky is the limit as to where it can take you. I fully believe that as I'm looking into this crowd that on the plaza here tonight are the future innovators and leaders of the United States. Pretty soon you won't be in high school anymore — you can be the next generation of game-designers and entrepreneurs and community organizers and anything else you decide to do.

But first, for any of that to be possible, you need to capitalize on this precious time you have as a student.

Every successful adult that you might look up to once sat in a classroom and did homework and studied and learned just like you.

My friend Barack Obama was also once a student just like you — and if you read his book you know that he was going down the wrong path — angry at the world and feeling sorry for himself. But he got serious — he took responsibility — and he controlled his destiny — and you can, too. He didn't have his life all mapped out when he was a teenager. In fact, he transferred colleges and then changed careers a few times — but his education and a strong sense of responsibility drove him to each new achievement in his life, all the way to the Oval Office in the White House, just up the street.

And sometimes your first dream doesn't work out, but a good education buys you options. When I was in school, I wanted more than anything to play in the NBA. I tried out for the Boston Celtics, but I didn't make it. I didn't give up on basketball though, and I ended up getting to play pro ball for a few years in Australia and then when that was over I changed careers, following my mom into the field of educational leadership.

So, yes, your journey as a student is long. Sometimes, it's challenging. But with grit, taking responsibility, and keeping your sights set on smart long-term goals, you can accomplish extraordinary things.

I want to shout out the band Kids These Days, who are here tonight. As teenagers in Chicago, they didn't wish their way onto the lineup at Lollapalooza. They didn't fantasize their way into a record deal. No, they worked

hard. They worked smart. And they worked for a very long time to realize their dreams.

Tonight they get the microphone and the spotlight. But behind the scenes to get to the stage, they put in countless hours and developed incredible teamwork when no one was watching. They took responsibility for their journey.

Education and responsibility: that means being a scholar and being a go-getter and being someone who contributes to the community. Each of you can do this and drive yourselves to wherever you want to go.

Of course, the risks of not taking responsibility and not capitalizing on your educational opportunities are extremely serious. Right now, twenty-five percent of our young people are leaving school without a high-school degree and, with this economy, that's not going to drive them to a good long-term place.

The good news is that your education is yours to shape — yours to do what you want with it. My job, all the adults' jobs ultimately amount to trying to support you as you take control. We want each of you to build up your brains, your skills, and your networks of people whom you can help and who want to help you. You can never have too many people on your side rooting for you, and that means working at building good relationships with the adults in your lives.

One last thought: In the news around the country, a lot of people are talking about education. It's everywhere. When you listen to or participate in those conversations about education, I want you to substitute the word

“education” for your name — because those conversations are really about you and your future.

Tonight is a time for celebration and hope. There are always nervous butterflies around the start of school, and that’s a great thing. At this moment, you’ve got a new year rolled out in front of you like a red carpet. I want you to commit to getting in the driver’s seat of your education and making this your best school year ever. Your families and your communities are rooting for you. We’ve got your back.

Thank you very much.

14. Schools urged to participate in earthquake-preparedness drill

Please see this message from Secretary Duncan and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano:

Unlike hurricanes and other natural hazards, earthquakes strike suddenly, without warning, and can have disastrous and far-reaching effects. As you may recall, on August 23, 2011, a 5.8 magnitude earthquake hit Mineral, Virginia. This unexpected earthquake, felt as far north as New England and as far south as Georgia, reminded many how an earthquake can occur anywhere at any time. This earthquake occurred on the first day of school for many students and emphasizes the importance of school safety and being prepared for the unexpected.

The 2012 “Great ShakeOut” will be conducted on October 18. This drill, which can be conducted in as little as 90 seconds, provides a timely and relevant

opportunity for the entire community to get prepared, practice what to do to be safe (“Drop, Cover, and Hold On”), and learn what emergency plans need to be improved.

We strongly encourage you and your school or organization to register at www.ShakeOut.org, and join the more than 14 million participants, including thousands of schools, who will participate in these drills.

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of events like the ShakeOut, and how critical they are for school preparedness. In a recent 2011 earthquake-preparedness survey, *fewer than half of education institutions indicated that they train staff or students in earthquake preparedness*. The ShakeOut offers a unique opportunity for schools to train students and staff on preparedness and to increase awareness of the “Drop, Cover, Hold On” method for protecting ourselves during an earthquake.

The Resources section of each ShakeOut website provides drill manuals for K-12 schools, colleges, universities, and organizations, as well as other materials to plan, prepare, and promote your drill. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education’s Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center website, <http://rem.ed.gov>, provides and disseminates information, training, and resources about emergency management to help schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education learn more about creating and maintaining emergency-management plans. Additional information on all hazard planning and

response can be found on FEMA's Ready campaign website, www.ready.gov, where you can also join the National Preparedness Coalition. Sign up today and Pledge to Prepare!

If you have any questions regarding the ShakeOut, please visit www.ShakeOut.org or e-mail info@shakeout.org.

Other:

15. Registration open for National Student Mock Election

Please see this notice from the Pearson Foundation:

The largest student-driven civics project in the United States is open for voter registration. The [My Voice™ National Student Mock Election](#) gives students across the country the opportunity to cast their votes for candidates in both the federal and state elections, and to talk about the issues they care about this fall and beyond.

This program, a digital initiative of the Pearson Foundation, builds on the 30-year history of the National Student/Parent Mock Election and My Voice, the leading program in student voice. More than 50 million young voters have participated while learning about the importance of using their own voice to share their perspectives on important issues. In 2012, national student voting begins on October 25 and culminates on the National Mock Election day, November 1, in advance of the nation's election.

For the first time this year, the National Student Mock Election will take place entirely online, as will student polling on national topics, social issues, education, and local communities. Students, teachers, and parents are encouraged to register their schools to take part at nationalmockelection.org.

Teachers are encouraged to use the free [materials and curriculum](#) developed for the program to create thoughtful lessons leading up to and around the upcoming election of the president, U.S. senators and representatives, and state governors.

The National Student Mock Election was co-founded by Edward Stanley and Gloria Kirshner in 1980, as the National Student/Parent Mock Election.

For more information and to register to vote, go to www.nationalmockelection.org.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>